

## Peace on Earth and good will to all

Trim a tree for Providence Hospital's annual auction

BY JACKIE FORTUNATA

December is a complicated month. Whether or not you celebrate the holidays, you can hardly ignore them. We are deluged with music, words, and sights touting the holidays. But what you do in response to the mass appeal is up to you. It depends on your religious and spiritual convictions, kids, partner, friends, and degree of "outness" to your family. Almost everything about you influences how you'll celebrate, or how you won't, and how you'll feel about it. What are lesbians doing this month? Can we use the holidays to further lesbian community?

The humbugs are right about Christmas. It is perverted by commercialism and media hype. Every year Christmas appears earlier in the stores. The push is on to do Christmas right.

We agree with the humbugs about Christmas hype, but we celebrate, anyway. Why we celebrate is answered by how we do it. We choose from Christmas, Hanukkah, winter solstice, or the African harvest festival. We light candles, go to services, sit in sweat lodges. And rituals with no spiritual meaning abound: tree trimming, carolling, gift giving, feasting, and kissing under the mistletoe. If we have kids, then Christmas is for them, celebrated with Santa Claus, if not Jesus.

Most of us don't want to be alone in December; we want to be with family and friends. This is so important to us that we will do almost anything to make it happen, but peace on Earth happens in the December rush for few people. And we often get the added stress of family versus friends. Will my friends accept my parents? Will my parents accept my lover?

Some people spend time at more than one Christmas: one with mom, one with dad, one with friends, and one with their lover — they are acutely aware of the limits and boundaries of relationships. You may be invited to dinner at your sister's, to whom you are out, but her in-laws will be there, and you are not out to them.

Private rituals are certainly important to each of us. However, I propose another use for December. There's a Christmas phenomenon that I think the lesbian and gay community can take advantage of. What do we do for the hungry at Christmas? We feed them. In fact, we feed them a feast. The invisible poor are visible during December and that prods the collective consciousness of America. People set aside



their private concerns and think of others.

We can take advantage of this time to spotlight our community, making the invisible, visible; and we can do this without coming out as individuals.

I have a specific proposal for Christmas 1989. Every year Providence Hospital auctions Christmas trees to raise money for indigent patients. Decorated and donated by civic and commercial groups, these trees are usually in turn donated to children's hospitals, battered women's shelters, and other institutions.

Imagine the impact of a tree at that show decorated and donated by the lesbian and gay community. By contributing to the larger community we would advertise our presence in a positive way. Next year, let's add to the peace on Earth for gays and lesbians by showing our good will to all.

*This is first in a series of opinion pieces submitted through the efforts of the Lesbian Community Project.*

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